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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4087
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS KINSHASA 000918

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KPKO](#) [KDEM](#) [CG](#) [ELECTIONS](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KABILA'S MOTHER SPEAKS OUT

¶1. (U) Summary: In a rare public interview, President Kabila's mother, Mama Sifa Maanya, sought to dispel rumors regarding the President's origins, saying unequivocally that Kabila is her son by birth. Speaking to the Belgian newspaper "Le Soir," Sifa described the struggles and sacrifices she and her family made on behalf of the Congo. Sifa said despite the years spent in exile -- necessary for their own protection -- the Kabila clan never stopped fighting for the liberation of the country from the despotism of Mobutu. Moreover, Sifa said she and Kabila's father, Laurent, instilled in their son Joseph a love for his country and the will to unify and bring peace to it. End summary.

¶2. (U) In an interview published June 2 in the Belgian newspaper "Le Soir" (reprinted in several Kinshasa newspapers), Mama Sifa Maanya, the mother of President Joseph Kabila, defended her son against persistent rumors that he is not truly "Congolese." Sifa said Kabila and his twin sister, Jaynet, were born in 1971 while she and her husband (and future DRC president) Laurent, were living in the village of Wimbi along Lake Tanganyika while leading the rebellion against Mobutu. Sifa said accusations that Kabila is "Rwandan" are truly hurtful to her, but added that it is not her place "to go on television" to respond to these allegations. Nonetheless, Sifa said Kabila is definitely her child (and is, therefore, "Congolese"), the same as Jaynet and her other children.

¶3. (U) Sifa took the opportunity as well to defend the memory of Laurent and the sacrifices the two of them made for the Congo. Sifa said Laurent dedicated 40 years of his life to liberate his country, only to be assassinated by his own countrymen. As for her own contributions, Sifa said she spent 32 years of her own life with Laurent and dedicated herself to her family and the struggle against Mobutu. She asked rhetorically how anyone, knowing what she endured for the Congo, could say she too was Rwandan.

¶4. (U) Sifa spoke in detail about the years of sacrifice she and her family made while living in the bush and in exile while fighting against the Mobutu regime. Sifa said that they lived a simple life, living in camps without electricity, sometimes forced to eat nothing but grass, and not having much clothing to wear. Sifa said she and her family were able to survive, however, by farming and fishing, while she herself sold vegetables in the local markets. All the while, Sifa said she remained with Laurent to combat injustice and to continue the struggle against Mobutu. It was only after being chased by Mobutu's forces during the late 1970s the Kabila family decided it needed to flee to Tanzania and continue the rebellion in exile.

¶5. (U) While in exile, Joseph was sent to the French School in Dar es-Salaam and later to university in Uganda. Sifa said Kabila later cut his studies short to join his father to help prepare for the coming war against Mobutu. During this time outside the DRC, Sifa said she taught her children to love their country and respect their family, as well as the principles of honor, modesty and humility. Sifa said these were the values behind their revolution to combat injustice in the Congo.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The interview with Mama Sifa, who rarely makes public appearances or statements, is another effort by the Kabila campaign to set the record straight regarding the President's origins. Sifa did not, however, present any definitive proof that Joseph was born on Congolese soil. Nor does Sifa say outright that she is Congolese herself. Nonetheless, in presenting the story of the Kabilas' long fight against Mobutu, under the worst of conditions, Sifa imparts upon Joseph the impeccable credentials of a true Congolese revolutionary. End comment.

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